IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Canceled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (canceled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please CANCEL claims 1 and 5, AMEND claims 2-4, 7-10 and 12-19 and ADD claim 20 in accordance with the following:

1.   (canceled)

2.   (currently amended)   An access request processing method for use in a communication device providing inter-user communication, the access request processing method comprising:

storing statuses of the users;

preparing a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ <u>first</u> user from whom there is a request for communication with ~~another~~ <u>a second</u> user, to status of the ~~other~~ <u>second</u> user with whom communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication<u>,</u> <u>the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user</u>; and

when a request for communication occurs, <u>looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user,</u> determining and reporting to the communication device a process for the request based, in the policy, on the <u>second</u> user with whom communication is requested.
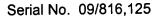
3.   (currently amended)   An access request processing system for use in a communication device providing communication among user terminals on a network, the access request processing system comprising:

first storing means for storing information related to users;

second storing means for storing statuses of the users;

third storing means for storing a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ <u>first</u> user <u>as a communication requester</u> from whom there is a request for communication with ~~another~~ <u>a second</u> user <u>as a communication requestee</u>, to status of the ~~other~~ <u>second</u> user with whom communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication<u>, the</u>

processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user;

authentication means for verifying, when a request for communication occurs, the communication requester;

liaising means for acquiring from the communication device the communication requester and requestee, as well as content of the communication;

determining means for looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user, determining and reporting to the communication device a process for the request, by obtaining one of the processes in the policy based on the communication requestee and the content of the communication acquired by said liaising means, and consulting status of the communication requestee and information related to the communication requester, based on result of the verification by said authentication means and on the obtained processing policy;

an information recording means for accepting input of recording in said first storing means the information related to users;

a status recording means for accepting input of and recording in said second storing means the statuses of the users; and

a policy recording means for accepting input of and recording in said third storing means the processing policy.

4. (currently amended) An access request processing device for use in a communication device providing communication among user terminals on a network, the access request processing device comprising:

first storing means for storing information related to users;

second storing means for storing statuses of the users;

third storing means for storing a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ first user as a communication requester who requests communication with ~~another~~ a second user as a communication requestee, to status of the ~~other~~ second user with whom communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user;

authentication means for verifying, when a request for communication occurs, the communication requester;

liaising means for acquiring from the communication device the communication

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requester and requestee, as well as content of the communication; and

determining means for <u>looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user</u> determining and reporting to the communication device a process for the request, by obtaining one of the processes in the policy based on the <u>communication</u> requestee and the content of the communication acquired by said liaising means, and consulting status of the <u>communication</u> requestee and information related to the <u>communication</u> requester, based on result of the verification and on the obtained processing policy.

5.   (cancel)

6.   (original) An access request processing device according to claim 4, further having an inquiry means for inquiring among communication requestee terminals, according to the process determined by the determining means, whether to permit the communication request, and for obtaining a reply to the inquiry.

7.   (currently amended) An access request processing device according to claim 4, further comprising a request instructing means for, if information content related to the <u>communication</u> requester in order to handle the communication request is not recorded in said first storing means, making an obtain request for the information among ~~the~~ <u>a plurality of communication</u> requester terminals and obtaining a reply.

8.   (currently amended) An access request processing device according to claim 4, being connected to a peripheral information-providing means storing information related to the users, further comprising an information obtaining means for obtaining information related to the <u>communication</u> requester from the peripheral information-providing means if information content related to the <u>communication</u> requester in order to handle the communication request is not recorded in said first storing means.

9.   (currently amended) An access rights setting device for use in a communication device for inter-communication among other communication devices via a relay terminal, the access rights setting device comprising:

an information recording means for accepting input of information related to users and recording the information in the relay terminal;

a status recording means for accepting input of status on the users and recording the statuses in the relay terminal; ~~and~~

a policy recording means for accepting input of, and recording in the relay terminal, a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ <u>first</u> user from whom there is a request for communication with ~~another~~ <u>a second</u> user, to status of the ~~other~~ <u>second</u> user with whom

communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user; and

a determining means for looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user and for determining and reporting a process for the request to the communication device.

10. (currently amended) An access rights setting device according to claim 9, wherein said policy recording means further accepts input of, and records in the relay terminal, an the attribute-assigning policy in which an attribute of the one first user who requests communication with the other second user is set for the other second user.

11. (original) An access rights setting device according to claim 9, further having a replying means for reporting to the users inquiries from the relay terminal whether to permit requested communications, and for accepting and sending to the relay terminal user replies to the inquiries.

12. (currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium storing an access request processing program for use in communication devices providing communication among user terminals on a network, the computer-readable recording medium storing an access request processing program for executing:

a step of storing information related to users;

a step of storing statuses of all the users;

a step of storing a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each in turn being according to a one first user as a communication requester from whom there is a request for communication with another a second user as a communication requestee, to status of the other second user with whom communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user;

a step of verifying, when a request for communication occurs, the communication requester;

a step of acquiring from the communication device the communication requester and requestee, as well as content of the communication;

looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user;

a step of determining a process for the request by obtaining one of the processes in the

policy based on the acquired <u>communication </u>requestee and the content of the communication, and consulting status of the <u>communication </u>requestee and information related to the <u>communication </u>requester, based on result of the ~~verification in said step (D)~~ <u>verifying the communication requester</u> and on the obtained processing policy; and

~~a step of~~ reporting the determined process to the communication device.

13.   (currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium storing an access rights setting program for use in a communication device for inter-communication among other communication devices via a relay terminal, the computer-readable recording medium storing an access rights setting program for executing:

~~a step of~~ accepting input of information related to users and recording the information in the relay terminal;

~~a step of~~ accepting input of status on the users and recording the statuses in the relay terminal; ~~and~~

~~a step of~~ accepting input of, and recording in the relay terminal, a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ <u>first </u>user from whom there is a request for communication with ~~another~~ <u>a second </u>user, to status of the ~~other~~ <u>second </u>user with whom communication is requested, and to content of the requested communication<u>, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user; and</u>

<u>looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user and determining and reporting a process for a request to the communication device.</u>

14.   (currently amended) An access request processing method for use in an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the access request processing method comprising:

storing per information item user statuses related to the information;

preparing a processing policy in which processes for information requests are set per information item, the processes each in turn being according to a ~~one~~ <u>first </u>user who requests information, to status of ~~another~~ <u>a second </u>user related to the information, and to the information the request targets<u>, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user;</u>

when a request for any of the information items occurs, <u>looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user,</u> determining and reporting to the information providing device a process for the request based on the processing policy for

the information the request targets.

15. (currently amended) An access request processing system for use in an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the access request processing system comprising:

first storing means for storing information related to requesters requesting the information;

second storing means for storing statuses of users related to the information the requests target;

third storing means for storing a processing policy in which processes for information requests are set for each of the users, the processes being according to information requesters including a first user, to statuses of the users including a second user related to the information, and to the information the requests target, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user;

authentication means for verifying, when an information provision request occurs, the information provision requester;

liaising means for acquiring from the information providing device the information requester and the information the request targets;

determining means for looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user, determining and reporting to the information providing device a process for the request, by obtaining one of the processes in the policy based on the information the request targets acquired by said liaising means, and consulting information related to the information requester and status of the second user related to the information the request targets, based on the result of information requester verification by said authentication means and on the obtained processing policy;

an information recording means for accepting input of and recording in said first storing means the information related to the information requester;

a status recording means for accepting input of and recording in said second storing means the status of the second user related to the information; and

a policy recording means for accepting input of and recording in said third storing means the processing policy settings.

16. (currently amended) An access request processing device for use in an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the access request processing device comprising:

first storing means for storing information related to information requesters including a

first user requesting the information;

second storing means for storing statuses of users including a second user related to the information the requests target;

third storing means for storing a processing policy in which processes for information requests are set for each of the users, the processes being according to the information requesters, to statuses of the users related to the information, and to the information the requests target, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user;

authentication means for verifying, when an information provision request occurs, the information provision requester;

liaising means for acquiring from the information providing device the information requester and the information the request targets;

determining means for looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user, determining and reporting to the information providing device a process for the request, by obtaining one of the processes in the policy based on the information the request targets acquired by said liaising means, and consulting information related to the information requester and status of the second user related to the information the request targets, based on the result of information requester verification by said authentication means and on the obtained processing policy.

17.   (currently amended) An access rights setting device for use in an information terminal connected via a network to an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the access rights setting device comprising:

an information recording means for accepting input of and sending to the information providing terminal, information related to users requesting provision of the information;

a status recording means for accepting input of and sending to the information providing device, status of users related to the information; and

a policy recording means for accepting settings for and sending to the information providing device, a policy in which processes for information requests are set for each information item, the processes being according to information requesters including a first user, to statuses of the users including a second user related to the information, and to the information the requests target, the policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user; and

a determining means for looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the

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first user and the second user and for determining and reporting a process for the request to the information providing device.

18. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium storing an access request processing program for use in an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the computer-readable medium storing an access request processing program for executing:

a step of storing information related to information requesters including a first user as an information requester requesting the information;

a step of storing statuses of users including a second user related to the information the requests target;

a step of storing a processing policy in which processes for information requests are set for each of the users, the processes being according to the information requesters, to the statuses of the users related to the information, and to the information the requests target, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user;

a step of verifying, when an information provision request occurs, the information provision requester;

a step of acquiring from the information providing device the information requester and the information the request targets;

looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user;

a step of determining and reporting to the information providing device a process for the request, by obtaining one of the processes in the policy based on the information the request targets acquired in said step (E) the acquiring, and consulting information related to the information requester and status of the second user related to the information the request targets, based on the result of the verifying of the information requester verification in said step (D) and on the obtained processing policy; and

a step of reporting to the information providing device the process determined in said step (F) the determining.

19. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium storing an access rights setting program for use in an information terminal connected via a network to an information providing device providing information to peripheral information terminals in response to requests, the computer-readable medium storing an access rights setting program for executing:

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a step of accepting input of and sending to the information providing terminal[[,]] information related to users including a first user as an information requester requesting provision of the information;

a step of accepting input of and sending to the information providing device[[,]] status of users including a second user related to the information; and

a step of accepting settings for and sending to the information providing device[[,]] a policy in which processes for information requests are set for each information item, the processes being according to information requesters, to statuses of the users related to the information, and to the information the requests target, the policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting information and the second user; and

looking up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user and determining and reporting a process for a request to the information providing device.

20. (new) An access rights setting device for use in a communication device for inter-communication among other communication devices via a relay terminal, the access rights setting device comprising:

an information recorder which accepts input of information related to users and records the information in the relay terminal;

a status recorder which accepts input of status on the users and records the statuses in the relay terminal;

a policy recorder which accepts input of, and records in the relay terminal, a processing policy in which processes for communication requests are set for each of the users, the processes each respectively based on a first user from whom there is a request for communication with a second user, status of the second user with whom communication is requested, and content of the requested communication, the processing policy including an attribute-assigning policy setting a relationship between the first user requesting communication and the second user; and

a determining unit which looks up the attribute-assigning policy and information of the first user and the second user and determines and reports a process for the request to the communication device.